

I₄ COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S HISTORY

American who visited him, George Ticknor, was dazzled by the opulence and luxury he saw. ' He lives in a beautiful villa with a rich, large, brilliant lawn behind it, keeps a carriage, and—as he told us—keeps four men-servants including his coachman, and lives altogether in elegant style for a man of letters/ ¹

However, the success of Macaulay's History was not due merely to the genius or the labour of the author. The prosperity of any book depends on the temper of the audience to which it is addressed. Macaulay's was happy in the moment of its appearance ; it expressed ideas which just then were universally popular ; it expressed them in such a way that it flattered the self-esteem of the English people. We are not as other nations, Macaulay seemed to say ; compare their revolutions with ours. Our Revolution of 1688 was ' the least violent' and ' the most beneficent ' of all revolutions. The panegyric upon it which closes Macaulay's account of the interregnum forms a kind of peroration to the first instalment of the History. It was written in November 1848.

Now, if ever, we ought to be able to appreciate the whole importance of the stand which was made by our forefathers against the House of Stuart. All around us the world is convulsed by the agonies of great nations. Governments which lately seemed likely to stand during ages

have been on a sudden shaken and
overthrown. The
proudest capitals of Western Europe have
streamed with
civil blood. . . . Meanwhile in our island the
regular course
of government has never been for a day
interrupted.
And, if it be asked what has made us to differ
from others,
the answer is that we never lost what others
are wildly and
blindly seeking to regain. It is because we
had a pre-
serving revolution in the seventeenth century
that we have

¹ Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor (2 vols. ;
1876), ii. 323.